



Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the significance of the right to protest in a democracy. (150 words)

21 Apr, 2020 GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

Approach

- Briefly discuss the importance of dissent in democracy.
- Link right to protest with freedom of expression. Give examples of constitutional provisions.
- Provide a balanced argument against the right to protest.
- Conclude suitably

Introduction

All across the world democracy is the most acceptable form of governance because every citizen has a right to dissent without fear of victimisation. Dissent means a strong difference of opinion on a particular subject, especially about an action taken by the government..

In this context, Right to dissent or protest forms a cornerstone of India's constitutional democracy.

Body

- The Right to protest peacefully is enshrined in the Indian Constitution—Article 19(1)(a) guarantees the freedom of speech and expression; Article 19(1)(b) assures citizens the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- By virtue of exercising Right to protest, citizens become watchdogs and constantly monitor governments' acts. It also provides feedback to the governments about their policies and actions after which the concerned government, through consultation, meetings and discussion, recognises and rectifies its mistakes.
- It strengthens representative democracy by enabling direct participation in public affairs.
- Also, it provides a necessary voice for all those who are oppressed and are marginalised for various reasons.
- However, when a protest turns violent, it defeats the very purpose of the protest. As now the government can use force to suppress a violent protest.

Conclusion

A democracy's ability to preserve its citizen's right to protest is a result of that democracy's political health. However, resorting to violence during the protest is a violation of a key fundamental duty (enumerated in Article 51A, the Constitution makes it a fundamental duty of every citizen "to safeguard public property and to abjure violence") of citizens.

